United Nations A/C.2/54/SR.19

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
1 March 2000
English
Original: Spanish

Second Committee

Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 22 October 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Matute (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Peru)

Contents

Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

00-27326 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Mr. Matute (Peru), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/54/25 and Add.1, A/54/80, A/54/98, A/54/212; A/C.2/54/5)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (A/54/131-E/1999/75)

1. **Mr. Seki** (Japan) said that his country had made it a top priority to bring about the conditions necessary for the early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. The international community must develop highly credible and feasible systems to implement the mechanisms established under the Protocol, particularly the "clean development" mechanism, so that effective measures against global warming could be taken. It was essential to speed up negotiations on the mechanisms and the question of compliance at the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to be held in October 1999 and to find opportunities and appropriate forums for negotiations on outstanding issues before the convening of the next session. Japan recognized the need to adopt a protocol on biosafety, which should be based on the latest scientific knowledge and data and be formulated in such a way as to allow the maximum number of States to accede to it.

2. It was important to address the issue of coherence among multilateral environmental agreements, since there were currently numerous international instruments in that area. Tackling global environmental issues required the efforts of the whole international community. In order to achieve compliance with international norms, the effective implementation of those multilateral agreements should be promoted and, more concretely, coordination should be improved.

3. **Mr. Gerus** (Belarus) expressed his appreciation for the reports on the item before the Committee. The previous year had been marked by the adoption of important decisions at the international and regional levels with a view to promoting the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme of Action adopted in 1997. Belarus also agreed with the results of the consultations held on the report of the Secretary-General concerning the environment and human settlements. In particular it would like to see the Programme activities in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe intensified, inasmuch as the environment of the region had deteriorated owing to armed conflicts and the recent technological catastrophes.

4. Belarus supported the measures for strengthening the United Nations Office in Nairobi and the strengthening of UNEP and hoped that reform and revitalization measures would be implemented speedily within the framework of resolution 53/242. He welcomed the establishment of a joint UNEP/Habitat group to deal with the environment and human settlements in the Balkans.

5. Belarus expressed its satisfaction at the way in which the Commission on Sustainable Development was carrying out its medium-term work programme. Determination of the topic to be dealt with by the Commission at each session and consideration of current issues with the participation of the private sector and non-governmental organizations would provide an opportunity for taking up aspects relating to the implementation of Agenda 21 and formulating more effective joint measures for achieving better results. Next year the Commission's work would be particularly significant, since the dialogue within the framework of the ad hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests was to be concluded and measures formulated to strengthen international cooperation in matters relating to energy resources and sustainable development. Nevertheless, he was concerned that at its seventh session the Commission had decided not to consider the draft resolution on sustainable development in the Balkans, which Belarus regarded as falling within the competence of the Commission.

6. Belarus reaffirmed its support for the practical implementation of Agenda 21. In the past seven years the Government had adopted measures with a view to achieving specific objectives, including the formulation of a sustainable development programme and improvement of legislation on the environment, which had made it possible to implement the provisions of Agenda 21 in the context of the country's socio-economic development. Inventories of greenhouse gases and guidelines on the disposal of waste from the burning of such gases and technological processes, as well as a national programme on climate, were being drawn up. Belarus was greatly concerned about the implementation of the provisions of Agenda 21 with regard to sustainable development in countries with

economies in transition. Only with the support of the international community could progress be made in that area on a global scale.

7. **Mr. Malhoutra** (India) associated himself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and commended the quality of some of the reports, such as that on the follow-up to Agenda 21, which contained a clear analysis of constraints on the implementation of the relevant mandates. On the other hand, others were purely descriptive and gave little sense of what the Second Committee could add of value to the deliberations on the issues under consideration.

8. The global partnership for sustainable development and environment established at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had been based on the premise that environmental problems should not be tackled in isolation and that it was necessary to address the basic development needs of the developing countries. It had then been recognized that the requirements of economic growth and eradication of poverty, which had and should have maximum priority for the developing countries, prevented the allocation of adequate resources to cope with environmental questions. It had also been recognized that the industrialized countries should take urgent measures, both corrective and preventive, to resolve pressing global environmental problems. Seven years after the Conference, it was clear that the developed countries had done little to alter their unsustainable consumption and production and had not taken significant measures to defray the high cost of new environmentally sound technology. Furthermore, the developed countries were not particularly concerned about reducing gaseous pollutant emissions or assuming new obligations. In the negotiations on the Biosafety Protocol, the commercial interests of the developed countries had prevailed over concern about environmental questions, on which those same countries placed such great emphasis in other forums.

9. Nor had measures been taken on the basis of the premise that, as expressly stated in Agenda 21, substantial new and additional resources would be transferred to developing countries to meet, at the minimum, the incremental costs involved in addressing environmental obligations. However, in spite of the commitments made in other forums, the amount of financial resources available was now less than at the time of the Rio Conference. Official development assistance and resources for UNEP were at an all-time low, and that lack of resources was precisely the primary constraint on the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for its further implementation.

10. Another area of concern was the lack of progress on the question of transfer of environmentally sound technologies on preferential and concessional terms. Technologies critical for industrial development were being denied on grounds such as alleged dual use. Review of trade-related intellectual property rights would provide an opportunity for striking a balance between the need to offer incentives for innovation and the need to ensure that such technological advances were widely disseminated and harnessed for the benefit of all mankind.

11. Although the review of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 would take place in 2002, preparation should be begun well in advance in order to ensure the timely adoption of the relevant decisions for improving the implementation machinery. While the efforts being made by the Secretariat to address the in-house constraints through the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, additional resources would still have to be found and clear mandates and priorities established to facilitate implementation of the Programme.

12. India had been one of the first signatories to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and it would participate actively in the Third Conference of the Parties to be held in Recife, Brazil, in November 1999. Unfortunately, the implementation of the Convention continued to experience financial difficulties.

13. India, which would also participate actively in the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, reiterated the call by the non-aligned countries at the Durban Summit to developed countries to undertake urgent and effective steps to implement their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol through domestic action. Emissions trading could commence only after agreement had been reached, within the context of the Convention, on the principles and modalities of such trading, including the initial allocation of emissions entitlements on an equitable basis to all countries. It was also urgent that the developing countries should have the necessary

financial and technological resources to meet their commitments.

14. India attached the highest importance to the Biosafety Protocol and would attend the next Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. While major technological innovations, such as genetically modified organisms, had enormous potential for food production and enhancing food security, it would be prudent to first test their effects on the environment and on human beings. With greater political will it would be possible to reconcile commercial interests with the need to safeguard human health and preserve biodiversity. In that context, it was essential to take measures to protect indigenous biotechnology and block the granting of patents based on traditional knowledge of indigenous communities without procurement of the prior informed consent of the developing countries concerned and without arrival at any agreement on benefit sharing.

15. India had always attached the highest importance to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, which appropriately recognized that small island developing States and islands supporting small communities required special programmes and approaches, since they were ecologically fragile and particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and external economic turbulence. India had set up an island development authority, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, entrusted with the task of restoring the productive potential of a large number of islands forming part of the national territory and providing employment to local communities. Human resources development, administrative capacity-building and access to information had been crucial in that work. Small island developing States required integration into a global economic system that ensured their economic growth and enabled them to develop their industries, export their products and benefit from the advances of technology. The implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action would undoubtedly contribute to the attainment of that goal.

16. While a major part of India's technical cooperation programmes was devoted to the small island developing States, it was essential that the international community and other more fortunate States should share the responsibility of providing assistance to those countries. The transfer of appropriate technologies on concessional terms should also be promoted. He hoped that the meeting to be held in 2004 to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action would be an occasion for applauding the success of international cooperation, the lack of which he currently lamented.

17. **Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines) associated himself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He thanked the Secretary-General for his report on Agenda 21 (A/54/131) but registered his delegation's dissatisfaction over the late submission of the report on international institutional arrangements related to environment and development as requested in General Assembly resolution 53/186. It was important that delegations should receive documents in time so that they could study them properly and so that Governments could contribute into the work of the Committee.

18. The Philippines continued to support the implementation of Agenda 21 in all its aspects and had redoubled its efforts at the national level in order to achieve sustainable development and improve the standard of life of its population. For the Philippines, Agenda 21 had become a true covenant, not just another international commitment to be fulfilled. Both in the 10-point Agenda of the President of the Philippines and in the medium-term development plan, priority had been accorded to environmental issues in order to ensure that optimal use was made of the country's natural resources and that economic development plans considered the carrying capacity of the environment.

19. The Philippines had been among the first countries to establish, in accordance with Agenda 21, a body to promote sustainable development at the national levels. The Council for Sustainable Development consisted of government representatives, businesses and civil society, which participated on a footing of equality in decision-making. One of its early successes had been its contribution to the formulation of the national agenda on the environment and the promotion of sustainable development through strategic information and education campaigns. In order to bolster that agenda, the President of the Philippines had recently signed a memorandum on strengthening it and monitoring its implementation.

20. While responsibility for the implementation of Agenda 21 ultimately rested with the countries themselves, the United Nations system had a role to

play in the formulation and rationalization of guidelines for international organizations that provided policy advisory services and technical cooperation and supported national activities. It was also necessary to strengthen its capacity to translate into practice the outcomes of the deliberations of the Commission on Sustainable Development and to enhance coordination of its agencies, funds and programmes by making full use of modern information and communication technology. With regard to the transfer of environmentally sound technology, the Philippines would like to have more details about the new activities being pursued by the organizations of the United Nations system, in particular UNEP, UNCTAD, UNDP and UNIDO.

21. For their part, Member States had the responsibility to provide well defined guidelines and to be coherent in their actions. The necessary resources for the additional tasks entrusted to the various agencies of the system must be obtained, or the activities must be adapted to available resources. Similarly, in view of the constraints indicated with regard to lack of institutional capacity, vagueness of mandates and assigned roles and lack of clearly defined priorities, the Administrative Committee on Coordination might be requested to spell out the gaps clearly, for example, which agencies should have their mandates defined more clearly so that Member States could take the appropriate measures. Lastly, it should be recalled that at its seventh session the Commission on Sustainable Development had reaffirmed that all countries should endeavour to change their consumption and production patterns, with the developed countries taking the lead. Comparable indicators should be developed to monitor compliance; the sustainable development commissions of those countries should also monitor the progress made and recommend best practices. The Philippines would like to be informed periodically about specific measures adopted by the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development.

22. **Mr. Hanif** (Pakistan) endorsed the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the sub-item under consideration. In that regard, he affirmed that seven years after the adoption of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, doubts had been raised about the viability of achieving two competing goals: environmental protection and socio-economic development. Pakistan was convinced that sustainable development was the only viable path to the future. Nevertheless, the causes of the lack of progress in the realization of the goals of Agenda 21 were strikingly different in the case of developed and developing countries.

23. While many developing countries had experienced declining rates of growth and social crises due to the increase in poverty and population growth and were more vulnerable to external shocks because of globalization, the developed countries were maintaining unsustainable lifestyles and levels of consumption that had led to environmental degradation in their own territories elsewhere in the world.

24. Three factors determine the magnitude of the effect of the human impact on the environment: the size of the population, per capita consumption of resources and the technologies used to exploit those resources. Despite the fact that the developing countries had the largest share of the global population, their impact on the environment was not as high as that of the developed countries, but it was not possible to reduce that impact because of lack of resources and the impossibility of acquiring environmentally sound technologies on preferential terms. The developed countries, with a smaller population and greater access to appropriate technologies, were exporting their unsustainable consumption and production patterns in the name of trade liberalization. Consequently, the world was moving ever further away from the goals set at the Rio Conference. Everything seemed to indicate that in 2002, when the implementation of Agenda 21 was reviewed 10 years after its adoption, the situation would be more alarming than in 1997.

25. Pakistan was deeply committed to the implementation of Agenda 21 and had made significant progress in controlling the rate of population growth. Its social policies were primarily focused on the eradication of poverty, and it had undertaken a number of projects for environmental conservation. Nevertheless, in order to achieve sustainable development, economically sound technologies and an enabling international economic environment were needed.

26. According to the report of the Secretary-General on sustainable development (A/54/131), the United Nations system had met with constraints because of lack of institutional capacity, owing to vague mandates

and a lack of clearly established priorities. That situation was understandable in view of the lack of resources, but Pakistan failed to understand that those difficulties should be attributed to "intergovernmental decisions" since those decisions were not adopted in a vacuum or without the participation of the Secretariat. The Secretariat should request appropriate clarifications at the time when the intergovernmental mechanisms were taking decisions.

27. To sum up, the international community could not and should not evade the common but differentiated responsibilities accepted at the Rio Conference. The globalization of the economy had underscored the urgency to devote adequate resources to the task of eradicating poverty, to facilitate access to environmentally sound technology and to curb the tendencies of some countries to pursue unsustainable consumption and production patterns, so that the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 in 2002 would not be as discouraging as that in 1997.

28. **Mr. Ibrahim** (Nigeria) fully supported the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Undoubtedly, a number of positive results had been achieved since the convening of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Binding instruments now existed on climate change, biodiversity, desertification and prior informed consent on trade in certain pesticides and hazardous chemicals. The principles set forth in the Rio Declaration had also been incorporated in national and international legal instruments.

29. In its national policy for the implementation of Agenda 21, Nigeria had included the integration of questions relating to the environment in development planning at all levels of government and the private sector, the strengthening of the legal basis for sustainable development, the creation and consolidation of capacity and education and information on environmental issues. The Government of Nigeria had also adopted complementary policy measures to facilitate the implementation of programmes on the environment. Those measures included a free universal basic education programme; the expansion of adult education and literacy schemes; provision of increased credit facilities to small-scale enterprises; improvement of primary health-care schemes; provision of rural electrification; and a ban on the export of wood until 25 per cent reserve forest cover was achieved. A Ministry of the Environment had been established, with the task of coordinating and consolidating protection and conservation programmes and collaborating with the international community in the implementation of Agenda 21. A draft plan of action had also been prepared for the implementation of Nigeria's Agenda 21.

30. Unfortunately, in spite of the efforts made, there were some areas in which progress had been marginal, because financial institutions had not provided adequate and predictable financial resources for sustainable development activities. Nor had new and additional resources been received for those activities, and the main reason was the failure of most developed countries in honouring their official development assistance commitments.

31. Furthermore, the burden of the external debt of the developing countries continued to increase, particularly in the case of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In 1998, the total external debt of the developing countries and the countries with economies in transition had been about 2.5 billion dollars. Furthermore, many of the least developed countries had been unable to meet their obligations and had accumulated payment arrears in addition to their external debt. It would be difficult for those countries to implement Agenda 21 unless they received assistance from the international community.

32. The situation had worsened because of economic globalization, which had marginalized the developing countries in capital markets and world trade. Nigeria hoped that the Second Committee would formulate concrete recommendations to address the major constraints hindering the fulfilment by the developing countries of their obligations with regard to the improvement of the global environment, particularly in the context of the preparations for the review of the implementation of the outcomes of the Rio Conference at the beginning of the new millennium.

33. **Mr. Koech** (Kenya) associated himself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the sub-item under consideration and said that it was essential to redouble efforts to overcome the tremendous problems caused by the degradation of the environment, described in the publication *Global Environmental Outlook 2000*. It would also be necessary to undertake mutually supportive efforts at the national and international levels for the creation of a favourable economic

environment that would reduce the existing gap between the developed and developing countries and promote international cooperation particularly in the areas of financing, transfer of technology, debt relief and improvement in the terms of trade.

34. In the developing countries, the problem of poverty was a great impediment to the achievement of the goal of sustainable development. The growth of urban centres compounded that problem and led to major degradation of the environment. The establishment of a more favourable international economic environment would stimulate the economic growth of those countries and help them to alleviate poverty. Similarly, the question of consumption and production patterns should be addressed when dealing with the situation relating to agriculture, human resources, trade and investment in the year 2000 and energy and transport in 2001.

35. Kenya supported the speeding up of negotiations on a binding legal international instrument to reduce contamination from pesticides and other harmful chemicals. It was also necessary to conclude as soon as possible the negotiations on the protocol on biosafety, in view of its importance for all countries and for the other protocols to be negotiated within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

36. An issue of particular concern for Kenya was the bidding process for the hosting of the secretariats of the various conventions, since the developing countries could not match the offers made by developed countries. Serious consideration must be given to that issue so as to ensure equitable distribution of resources.

37. **Ms. Jorgensen** (United Nations Development Programme) referred to important initiatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Poverty and Environment Initiative was a new mechanism sponsored jointly with the European Commission to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences among experts, researchers and policy makers with a view to promoting poverty eradication and environmental regeneration.

38. While Agenda 21 was clearly linked to the environment, attention was rarely focused on the importance it assigned to the sustainable management of natural resources as a means of poverty eradication. There were many assumptions, mostly erroneous, about the link between poverty and environmental degradation, and there was much talk of the "unavoidable downward spiral". However, the studies carried out within the framework of the Initiative had found that poverty did not necessarily lead to environmental degradation; that population growth did not always mean further erosion of natural resources; and that the poor were willing to preserve the resources on which their livelihood depended.

39. One of the fundamental objectives of the Initiative was to help Governments to create the necessary opportunities so that the population concerned could contribute to the sustainable management of natural resources. To that end, in September 1999 the first Forum of Ministers on Poverty and Environment had been organized. The Forum had considered various forms of collaborating with poor communities in order to help them to build better livelihoods and healthy environments. Specific strategies had been identified for, *inter alia*, facilitating their access to markets and appropriate technology, expanding their asset base and taking into account the problems of concern to them, such as pollution. The participants in the Forum had agreed to promote change in national and international plans, to implement the agreed strategies, to maintain collaboration and to constitute a strong advocacy group to promote their ideas in the international arena.

40. Capacity 21 was another UNDP innovative initiative, which dated from 1993 and was aimed at facilitating the integration of economic, social and environmental considerations into national programmes for sustainable development. Currently, it was supporting national programmes in 50 countries by promoting participation, encouraging decentralization, stimulating integration across sectors and working with Governments, the private sector and civil society. UNDP believed that Capacity 21 should be an integral part of the programmes it was implementing in the various countries to assist them in launching additional strategies for sustainable development.

41. In the past year, the main activities of Capacity 21 had focused on the areas of programming, the mainstreaming of principles of sustainable development, collection and dissemination of information and the strengthening of networking. In the future it would continue to promote the incorporation of sustainable development approaches in UNDP activities and to provide advisory services to developing countries on integrated development planning.

42. **Mr. Ainchil** (Argentina) associated himself with the statement made by Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group and said that the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Agenda 21 (A/54/131) showed the variety and transcendence of the initiatives of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other agencies and reflected the sound selection of priorities in view of the limited resources available.

43. Furthermore, the consideration of complex topics such as oceans and seas, tourism and consumption and production patterns at the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development constituted progress, inasmuch as they had a bearing on the sustainable development issues of the developing countries and the most elemental questions. Argentina was focusing great hopes on the impetus that the Commission on Sustainable Development could give to those questions.

44. The initiatives described in the report of the Secretary-General developed highly important aspects of Agenda 21, and their implementation was essential for poverty eradication and attainment of sustainable development. Nevertheless, from a historical perspective, many of their goals were lacking in ambition when it was borne in mind that mankind would embark on the new millennium with a technological capacity that had been unthinkable a few decades earlier.

45. Argentina attached particular importance to the activities being carried out in various fields. He mentioned, in particular, the work plan being prepared by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Energy; the initiative on freshwater and environmental sanitation, a project of undeniable practical consequences for developing countries and countries with economies in transition; the projects for the transfer of environmentally sound technology, which were essential for the viability of the sustainable development strategies of developing countries; and the education and training plans and programmes for sustainable development being carried out in collaboration with member countries and other organizations of the United Nations system. Those two last initiatives concerned basic tools that would give developing countries an opportunity for appropriate and sustainable development.

46. The fact that there were still human communities where living conditions were extremely difficult and minimum means of subsistence were lacking might raise doubts regarding the basic ethics of the multilateral system. Moreover, if the support given to sustainable development was compared with the evolution of the global economy in the past decade, one might arrive at the conclusion that a historic opportunity had been lost.

47. In the report of the Secretary-General, attention was drawn to the limited financial and institutional support received for implementing Agenda 21. Accordingly, the international community, Governments and international agencies should renew the political commitments made at Rio and support Agenda 21. The Commission on Sustainable Development was a fundamental tool for giving impetus to specific actions for the benefit of the peoples. Argentina would continue to collaborate with it with renewed energy, in the service of the most crucial cause for the developing world at the beginning of the new millennium.

48. **Mr. Reshetniak** (Ukraine) said that in the past two years some progress had been achieved at the national and international levels, but it had not been possible to halt the deterioration of the ecological situation. Since the ecological systems of all countries, regions and continents constituted the indivisible biosphere of the planet, the rehabilitation of the northern forests of Ukraine was a contribution to the recreation of the "lungs" of Europe. Similarly, by protecting the environment of the Azov Sea area and the Dnieper Basin, Ukraine was helping to resolve the serious problem of the scarcity of freshwater resources in the region and in the world. In that context, Ukraine had focused its ecological policy on the development of legal and methodological bases for human resources management, environmental protection and nuclear safety. Recently, Parliament had approved guidelines on those issues that would meet the needs of the country and international standards. Environmental priorities had also been incorporated in Ukraine's economic and social development programme.

49. Ukraine attached great importance to regional cooperation to resolve environmental problems. The activities of the Economic Commission for Europe, in particular consideration of the environmental policies of the various countries of the region, were extremely useful for promoting the implementation of Agenda 21, both at the national and the regional levels. Ukraine had begun preparations for the Fifth Conference of

Ministers for the Environment, to be convened in 2002 within the framework of the initiative "Environment for Europe". The Conference would contribute to the elaboration of an ecological strategy for the region for the twenty-first century. Furthermore, with regard to the grave consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, Ukraine had begun construction of the envisaged shelter facility to ensure the ecological safety of the nuclear plant.

50. It was a positive fact that the working methods of the Commission on Sustainable Development had improved. The dialogue that would take place at its sessions between the representatives of business, industrial and scientific circles, non-governmental organizations and local authorities would add to the value of its decisions. In that context, his delegation expressed its satisfaction with the conclusions of the seventh session of the Commission on intersectoral issues, specifically, oceans and seas, sustainable tourism and consumption and production patterns and the fact that in the final documents account had been taken of the special problems of the countries with economies in transition. He also supported the recommendation to establish a consultative process on oceans and seas within the General Assembly.

51. Ukraine shared the view that the United Nations Environment Programme should continue to play a major role in the protection of the environment at the global level. He had noted with satisfaction that UNEP had embarked on a revitalization process and had overcome the crisis as a result of the energetic measures adopted in the past two years.

52. Since global warming had already affected some areas of the Earth and preliminary studies carried out by Ukraine showed that even slighter climate changes could affect the country's water and forest resources and agriculture, as well as coastal areas of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, Ukraine attached great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to which it was a party. It had signed the Kyoto Protocol and had set up an inter-agency commission for the implementation of its provisions. In accordance with its national legislation, it had adopted an ecological policy aimed at the introduction of energy-saving technologies, the establishment of effective control mechanisms and the provision of technological support to reduce the technological pressure of industry on the environment. In that context, it welcomed the measures aimed at accelerating the utilization of flexible mechanisms for the global reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in a cost-effective and efficient way.

53. Lastly, Ukraine reconfirmed its interest in acceding to the Convention to Combat Desertification and participating in the negotiations on an annex additional to the Convention in which the interests of Central and Eastern European countries would be taken into consideration.

54. **Mr. Robu** (Republic of Moldova) expressed his appreciation for the initiatives taken by various Governments to promote the dialogue on environmental issues and find solutions for common problems. The establishment of an environmental management group would assist Member States in better protecting the global environment in collaboration with United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. He also expressed appreciation to the donor countries that had provided financial and technical assistance for the resolution of environmental problems. Mention should also be made of the progress attained in the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 and, in particular, the increased use of solar energy.

55. The Government of the Republic of Moldova had demonstrated its political will by adopting the national plan of action on the environment and by ratifying the main international instruments on the subject, including the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. It had also acceded to the Convention on Access to Information and Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

56. At the same time, Moldova was cooperating closely in regional and subregional plans, particularly with regard to management of the Danube River basin and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council. Cooperation with international organizations had had positive results and had laid the basis for 20 environmental protection projects.

57. Being conscious that the implementation of Agenda 21 required the active participation of all concerned, Moldova had strengthened cooperation between state agencies, the scientific community and non-governmental organizations. Beginning in 2000,

the Global Environmental Facility would provide support for non-governmental organizations and institutions concerned with environmental issues.

58. Inasmuch as economic growth should not be achieved at the expense of the degradation of natural resources and environmental pollution, it was important to avoid the utilization of technologies that proved prejudicial to the environment. Accordingly, countries with economies in transition, including the Republic of Moldova, should not regard themselves as markets for the transfer of that type of technology. On the contrary, the implementation of the provisions relating to the transfer of environmentally sound technology to those countries should be speeded up. That transfer was highly effective when done on the basis of multilateral agreements and through the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme.

59. There was no doubt that existing ecological problems could be resolved if practical measures were adopted and the necessary financial resources were made available. At the same time, the principle establishing the responsibility of countries for the negative repercussions of activities undertaken by any one of them should be applied.

60. **Mr. Matuszewski** (Poland) associated himself fully with the statement made by the European Union and said that Agenda 21 and the programme for its further implementation had demonstrated the consensus of the international community that the goals of sustainable development could not be attained without environmental protection. However, despite the progress achieved at the national level in the implementation of sustainable development policies, the problem of the deterioration of the global environment continued to be a major concern. The international community should therefore invest its institutions with the capacity of functioning with a sufficient degree of flexibility.

61. Poland supported the measures to enhance the efficiency of UNEP as the leading United Nations body in the field of environment. UNEP should combine in an innovative way the ability to make appropriate use of scientific advances and information technology with activities for environmental protection. It should mobilize the participation of all the major partners in the decision-making process related to biodiversity, freshwater resources, oceans and seas, soil and climate. UNEP would play a catalytic role with a view to facilitating the coordinated implementation of multilateral environmental instruments and strengthening the interlinkages among them, as well as coordinating a more functional and integrated approach to problems in that area.

62. The Government of Poland, which had committed itself to the implementation of the provisions of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, had incorporated the principles of sustainable development in its national environmental plan, adopted by Parliament at the beginning of the 1990s. On 19 January 1995, Parliament had also adopted a resolution whereby all the economic branches of the Government were to coordinate their sectoral policies and strategies with the national environmental policies. All national policies, strategies and sectoral programmes, in particular the national development strategy to the year 2020, were based on the principles set forth in Agenda 21 and the Programme for its further implementation. Within the framework of the process of integration in the European Union (EU), Poland had made a commitment to harmonize its policies with EU standards.

63. Poland was an active supporter of regional initiatives for the implementation of the Agenda 21 recommendations, and in that context it had been one of the initiators of the regional programme Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Basin. The adoption of practical measures to ensure the more effective coordination of the various initiatives taken in implementation of the decisions of recent major United Nations conferences should be encouraged.

64. **Mr. Prosser** (Australia) said that once again the international community was required to adopt, as a matter of urgency, concerted measures to curb the degradation of natural resources that would inevitably affect the entire world. In order for the review of the progress made in the 10 years that had elapsed since the Rio Conference to yield positive results, the international community would have to continue taking steps to ensure that institutional mechanisms dealing with global environment issues were effective and focused. Australia welcomed in particular the recommendation of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session to establish "a" consultative process on oceans and seas (A/54/131-E/1999/75, para. 30). It was extremely important that the General Assembly should endorse that recommendation, which would lay the foundations for

more sustainable and integrated management of the world's oceans and coastal areas.

65. It would be most timely for the Commission at its eighth session to consider, in the context of sustainable development, the questions of the integrated planning and management of land resources, agriculture and financial resources, trade, investment and economic growth. In March 2000, within the framework of the preparatory activities for that session, Australia would host an international conference and exhibition on the protection of land against degradation (International Land Care 2000), to be held in Melbourne.

66. Another issue that should be taken up by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session was the development of national environmental and trade policies that would be mutually supportive in favour of sustainable development. There was an urgent need to adopt timely measures to facilitate greater coordination of economic and environmental protection activities. The next ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization, to be held in Seattle, might be an appropriate forum. In future trade negotiations, key priority should be accorded to consideration of factors that distorted trade and that might also have negative effects on the environment, in particular, subsidies in the agricultural and fisheries sectors. Further trade liberalization, coupled with environmental policy reform, could be beneficial for all from the economic, environmental and developmental viewpoints.

67. Australia welcomed the convening of an annual meeting at the ministerial level, under UNEP auspices, for consideration of policy issues of global concern. That forum should be used to discuss topical issues and arrive at consensus conclusions that would lay the foundations for the adoption of decisions at the national and regional levels. The discussions in such forums, which should produce concrete results and not be restricted to the formulation of government statements, would be a marker of United Nations and in particular UNEP reforms.

68. **Ms. Corado-Cuevas** (Guatemala) supported the statement made by the delegation of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the statement made by Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group, to which Guatemala belonged. In the Central American countries, the question of sustainable development had been dealt with at the highest level at presidential summits and within the framework of the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development. In Guatemala National Development Councils had been established with a view to ensuring the participation of civil society and maintaining the coherence of national policies, programmes and projects for sustainable development.

69. The question of climate change was a cause of concern, owing to its adverse consequences on the economy and the population of Guatemala. The international community should counter the trend towards global warming that was aggravating the effects of extreme natural phenomena. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol were steps in the right direction, but it was important that the countries mentioned in annex B of the Protocol (FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1) should carry out in full the commitments undertaken with regard to reduction of emissions. It was also necessary to expand global carbon-fixing capacity, and Guatemala was prepared to make a contribution to that end. The emission certificates mechanism should not be conceived of as a licence for developed countries to continue emitting harmful substances, but would be useful until such time as less harmful technologies could be used. Guatemala also supported the clean development mechanism.

70. The Central American countries, which contained approximately 12 per cent of global biodiversity, were making constant efforts to conserve it. With the assistance of the Global Environment Facility, the Central American Biological Corridor had been established. In Guatemala, a National Council on Biodiversity had been set up, made up from all the national sectors that used, studied and conserved biodiversity.

71. Guatemala shared the concern of the small island developing States, particularly those of the Caribbean, with regard to maritime transport of pollutant, hazardous or nuclear wastes and urged all nations to comply with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

72. **Mr. Basmajiev** (Bulgaria) associated himself with the statement made by Finland on behalf of the European Union and said that it was necessary to speed up as a matter of urgency the implementation of

Agenda 21 and the Programme for its further implementation, on the basis of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. He supported the conclusions of the Secretary-General on the constraints facing the United Nations system in the sphere of sustainable development (A/54/131-E/1999/75, sect. IV). The complementary activities of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and other United Nations conferences should take place basically at the national level, within the framework of collaboration among governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other concerned parties. The United Nations system should facilitate cooperation among all the partners. Lastly, in order for the review of the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21 since the Rio Conference to have truly useful outcomes, it was necessary to begin the preparatory activities as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.